



policebeat

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50 YEARS

PFNI MARKS
50TH BIRTHDAY
1971 - 2021

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Conference Reports • Life Saving Transplant • Benefits Scheme • Lottery Results • PIP Procedures

EDITORIAL

Time to take politics out of policing

Policing in Northern Ireland is under constant, unrelenting scrutiny. If it isn't the Policing Board or the Ombudsman, it's one or other of our political parties or commentators.

A political overlay or spin is attached to much of what the police do; it seems it's easier to knee-jerk than take the time to ascertain the facts. It's almost as if the rush to grab a headline trumps all else. The tabloid playbook of 'never let the facts get in the way of a good story' is alive and well when it comes to policing.

Twenty years on from the formation of the PSNI, the temptation is still irresistible to make policing the convenient political 'football' to suit a particular agenda. There is a lack of maturity in most debates that take place around operational matters and strategic objectives.

It is an indictment of some of our politicians that they seem more fixated on their press releases and sound bites than on measured, responsible behaviour that takes policing seriously.

We have seen policing in the eye of the storm for months on end during this pandemic. We heard how there was no confidence, two and three-tier policing

and unbalanced enforcement. Add to that mix, health regulations that did nothing for community or neighbourhood policing. All became spinning plates in a political circus act.

Needless to say, we heard precious little about the numbers who contracted Covid-19; the numbers who had to self-isolate or those who contracted the virus and continue to from suffer long covid. Neither did we hear very much about rising numbers of assaults on officers or the continuing efforts by republican gangs to murder our colleagues.

The Storey funeral, the unfortunate incident on the Ormeau Road, the Black Lives Matter protest and policing next to impossible situations with innumerable breaches all led to feverish chatter on our airwaves and fed an insatiable social media. We were pilloried. Challenged. Condemned. All without an ounce of balance, logic or reasoned discussion.

It's time our politicians realised the disservice they are doing the communities they purport to represent by their constant grandstanding.

If policing gets it wrong, there are mechanisms there to hold us to account. Mechanisms which all political parties have signed up to. All we ask is that you cut us a little slack. The job officers do is demanding and getting ever more demanding by the day. For once, let's wait for the facts before rushing to comment. Political input into policing should be constructive where possible and use the official oversight mechanisms where this is not possible.

It's time to end the tit-for-tat scenario where if something is interpreted as favouring one side of the community, it has to be at the expense of the other side. A little maturity would go a long way in the genuine effort to deliver a service that is committed to delivering policing for all.



PFNI MARKS 50TH MILESTONE

(A perspective delivered by PFNI Chair, Mark Lindsay MBE, at the 49th Annual Conference and the second to be held virtually)

CONFERENCE

I would like to extend a warm welcome to those of you who have recently been elected and join us for the first time. I hope that you enjoy your time as a representative knowing that you are helping and assisting your colleagues across a broad spectrum of issues.

As I have mentioned, this is our 49th Conference but importantly takes place in this our 50th anniversary year. Fifty years of representing police officers in Northern Ireland and building constantly on the foundation laid for us by previous officials and those who put their head above the parapet to ensure we are all represented. Given the current restrictions, we will be able to celebrate this milestone next year at our 50th Conference.

I would like to start by providing you with some background to how PFNI were created and evolved into the representative body we are today.

In 1971, Sgt Dick Wright was the secretary of the "Men's Representative Body" of the RUC, which at that time was more of a militarised organisation with very poor pay and conditions. Dick moved to affiliate the body with PFEW and shortly afterwards the Scarman Tribunal instigated widespread reforms of conditions in the RUC.

Sir Arthur Young became Chief Constable and after linking up with PFEW enabled the PFNI to be set up and this was enshrined in legislation in 1971 under the Police Association Regulations. R.M. Doherty was the first Chairman and Dick Wright was Secretary.

At that time a Constable earned around £1000pa and importantly we could now join in with the Constable's negotiating framework and were included in the national negotiating framework.

In 1977-78 a call for a Royal Commission into policing led to the Edmund Davies Report. As a result, police officers received a 30% pay rise and the pay formula linking police pay to RPI was introduced. The Police Negotiating Board (PNB) was also set up.

Officers were still excluded from any consultation on policy however and it was only when Hugh Annesley became Chief Constable, that PFNI were consulted on all policy. Every policy had a front cover which had consultation with PFNI as a pre-requisite to progression. This was a significant step in hearing the voice of frontline officers.

This has continued to this day and the constant review and further review of police pay and allowances has always been to the fore in the work of PFNI.

For those old enough to remember darker days, Alan Wright was key to outreach initiatives with political and influential people throughout the United Kingdom and beyond. He articulated the views of officers in the media at great personal risk to himself and was key to setting up many of the relationships that are still important to us today.

As you know, the PFNI has been involved in setting up bodies and supporting those who would help our colleagues and their families.

It shouldn't be lost on anyone in this conference, from whatever background or political viewpoint, that being a police officer in Northern Ireland was one of the most dangerous places to police in the world and sadly many of our colleagues and their families suffered as a result.

In the early days of the troubles, large sums of money were sent to the police by members of our own communities and

police forces in the United Kingdom, to support officers and their families who were subjected to many of these attacks.

In 1971 David Rogers and Don Milliken were only a few of many who were instrumental in setting up the RUC Benevolent Fund and the responsibility was given to the PFNI to administer this fund and manage the many donations being sent in. The fund has grown from strength to strength over the decades to provide support for our widows, officers and those in need. It has been a lifeline to many of those whose lives have been adversely affected by their policing experiences and helped many family members to lead better lives.

We should thank all those who were responsible for setting the Benevolent Fund up and to all our Assistant Secretaries who have been responsible for the day to day running, up until the appointment of the Chief Executive in January this year.

In 1999, the PFNI set up the Harp and Crown Credit Union and lent them £10000 to set up the facility for officers and their families. This grew to be a successful financial facility for police officers with the benefit of significant support from the PFNI. In recent years, the Credit Union have chosen to separate completely from PFNI and comply with more stringent accountability mechanisms. We wish them well in their future endeavours and are proud to have enabled it to grow.

We are all grateful to those officials who have gone before us, in making the PFNI the representative body it is today. We stand on the shoulders of great men who have enabled you and the people you represent to have a voice and we owe them all a huge debt of gratitude. It is my hope that we can continue to increase our influence in policing matters and look forward to our next 50 years.



**The Police Federation for Northern Ireland,
77-79 Garnerville Road, Belfast BT4 2NX
Tel: 028 9076 4200/1**